



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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Local Food Relief Effort Offers Opportunity to Feed the Hungry, Boost Small Businesses

CHICAGO — Working to help local families in need while also offering food options to local businesses and food pantries, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) today partnered with Chicago organizations, State Rep. Sonya Harper and State Sen. Mattie Hunter to host a cooking demonstration, tasting event and food relief effort in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood.

"As a long-time advocate for healthy food access and the growth of local food systems, it is heartening to see so many come together to help our residents and area businesses in such a challenging time," said Harper, who represents District 6, which includes Englewood

"If the current pandemic has shown us anything, it's that we're all in this together and it's our responsibility to show up and help when and where we can," said Colleen Callahan, director, IDNR. "For us at IDNR, that means connecting local organizations and businesses with a sustainable food choice: Asian carp. They're delicious, healthy and economical and, best of all, they're plentiful here in Illinois."

During the event, culinary expert and Executive Chef Chris Koetke demonstrated the best ways to cook and serve Asian carp to area business owners and food pantries at the Primo Center's Englewood Community Kitchens.

"We were excited to make Englewood Community Kitchens available for this important day," said Sandy Mitchell, who administers the Primo Center's newly created kitchen. "The space was designed to allow the Englewood community to gather and improve health outcomes through positive food experiences. Providing our families with a tasty, protein-rich food source checked all these boxes."

Following the cooking demonstration and tasting event, the prepared food items were transported to the Evening Star Missionary Baptist Church as part of a food relief effort supported by the Greater

Chicago Food Depository and the Get Growing Foundation. The Food Depository supplied fresh produce and other food items.

“The pandemic and its economic effects have put more of our neighbors at risk of hunger. Strong partnerships across the public and private nonprofit sectors are vital to ensure food access during this challenging time,” said Herman Carnie, director of food acquisition at the Food Depository. “We are so pleased to support this community event with nutritious fresh produce.”

The event utilized fish donated by the newly formed Midwest Fish Co-Op, a first-of-its-kind collaboration of fishers in Illinois.

“There is an increasing need to feed the hungry and we’re in a unique position to help,” said Sorce Enterprises President Roy Sorce, who created Sorce Freshwater Company which houses cooperative’s operations and various equipment used to harvest Asian carp along the Illinois River.

IDNR is currently planning future Asian carp food relief events throughout the state, including one in Aurora Aug. 28. For additional information, or to be a part of the event, contact Ted Penesis, director of the Office of Community Outreach, IDNR, at Ted.Penesis@Illinois.gov or 847-608-3108.

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